Moon Tales

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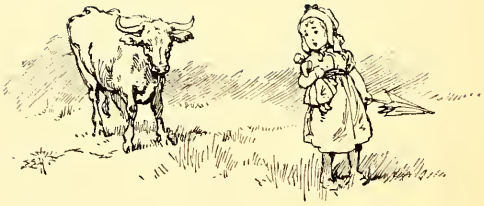
Moo Cow Tales.



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MOO COW TALES

By ROSAMUND NESBIT BLAND.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. STUART HARDY.

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Moo Cow Tales.

THE LITTLE BULL-CALF AND THE POPPY.

THERE was once a little calf who was always unhappy. He had a dear mother and two nice little white cousins, with brown ears, and a beautiful field

to live in, quite full of butter-cups and daisies, and cow-parsley, which little calves mustn't eat because it makes them ill, and yet he wasn't happy. It was really because all the other cows and calves could not understand him. And this was why: this little calf loved everything that was red, and, of course, you know that cows and bulls generally hate red things.

Now the field next to the cows' field was a cornfield, and among the corn there were a great many scarlet poppies. The little calf thought that he had never seen anything so beautiful as these red flowers, and he always

longed to get into the cornfield and kiss the poppies and tell them how much he loved them. All day long he used to stand with his little face pressed against the hedge, looking into the cornfield, and when the farmer's boy brought a bucket of food for the little calves, this little calf let his cousins eat all up and stood gazing at his darling poppies.

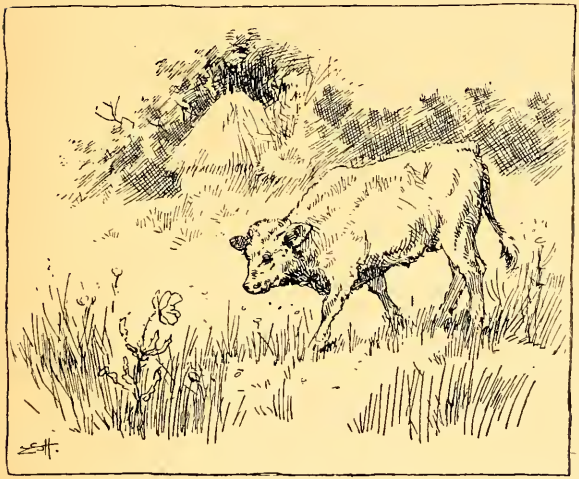
One day he found a gap in the hedge, just big enough for a little calf to squeeze through, and in a twinkling he was through the hole and among his dear flowers. He rolled about in the corn and kissed the poppies and said: "Dear little bright flowers,

I wish you would come into my field and live there with me," but the flowers did not speak to him. Then he got up and wandered all over the field, talking to all the poppies, until at last he stopped before the largest and reddest poppy of all.

"How beautiful you are!" he said. "Can't you speak to me?" and the tears came into his brown eyes because none of the poppies seemed to love him.

"Yes," said the poppy, "I can speak to you. What do you want me to say, and why are you crying? Be careful not to drop your tears on me, because they are warm and would wither my petals."

"I only wanted to tell you that I love you and want you to come and live with me in my field," said the little bull-calf.



"Is it a nice field?" said the poppy.

"Yes," he said, "it's a beautiful field—full of buttercups and

daisies, and Mother lives there, and my cousins, and all Mother's friends."

"I don't like buttercups and daisies and all your Mother's friends," said the poppy, "you must go away, little calf. And look!" she suddenly screamed, "you have trodden down all our dear friends, the corn-ears. Be off with you, at once, you wicked, *wicked* creature!" and she waved her leaves and shook so much with anger that the little calf was quite frightened and stumbled through the corn to his old hedge. But just as he was going to get through the hole he heard a gentle little voice at his feet, and looking

down, saw another poppy. She was smaller than the other poppies, but she looked at him with her beautiful black eye and said, "Dear little calf, I have watched you looking through the hedge every day, and I love you and will come and live in your field. Take me gently in your mouth and pull me up."

But just as he was going to do it the poppy cried out: "Quick, little calf, quick! I hear the farmer's footsteps. If he finds you here he will beat you. You must go back without me." And the little calf scrambled back through the hole in the hedge just as the farmer came up. Of

course the farmer was terribly angry when he saw all his corn trampled down, and he sent some men to fill up the hole in the hedge at once, so that our little calf couldn't get his dear poppy.

Now time went on and our little calf began to grow up, and he did all sorts of dreadful things, because he still loved everything that was red. He chased an old lady all down the lane because she was wearing a red shawl and he wanted to rub his head head against it.

He ate up the paint-rag belonging to a man, who came to paint the cows in the cornfield, because it was covered with red

G.S.H.

paint. I don't know why it was covered with bright red, because cows are not bright red, or buttercups and daisies either, are they? But still it was. And one day he even went into the farmer's wife's red sitting-room and sat on the floor with his head among the scarlet cushions on the sofa. After this everyone thought he must be mad, and the farmer's sons called him "the crazy bull-calf."

But all this time he never once forgot his dear poppy, and every evening he went down to the hole in the hedge and talked through it to her, until the autumn came and she went to seed. But

when the next summer came, and he was almost a full-grown bull, he went down to his hole in the hedge, and there in his own field was a little red poppy, and he knew at once that it had grown up from one of the seeds of his own poppy, which the kind wind had carried and dropped in the cow-field. So all the summer he talked to his poppy and loved her, and she loved him and they were very happy. But when the autumn came the poppy knew she must die, and they were both very sad.

One day, when the young bull was lying down watching his dear poppy's petals beginning

to shrivel, and as he was trying to shield her from the sun, the Green Witch of the Fields came along. She stopped when she saw the two friends and the tears came into her eyes, because she was sorry for them. But she quickly dashed her tears away, because if a green witch ever drops her tears she loses all her power and becomes a sort of green stuff, which the wind carries away and drops on to the ponds. You must often have seen it there. Perhaps your nurse told you it was duckweed, but now you will know better, won't you? And you must never try to walk on it because, you

see, the witches have lost their power and cannot hold you up. Well, when the witch found that the two friends could nearly make her cry she was very frightened, and she said to herself: "I must do something for the poppy so that she can always be with her friend, because if I pass by when the poppy is dead, I shall certainly drop my tears, and that would never do."

So she waved her green wand over the poppy and changed her into a little red fairy.

"Now," she said, "you can live for ever with your friend. Good-bye, dear children," and she slipped away on the wings of the wind.

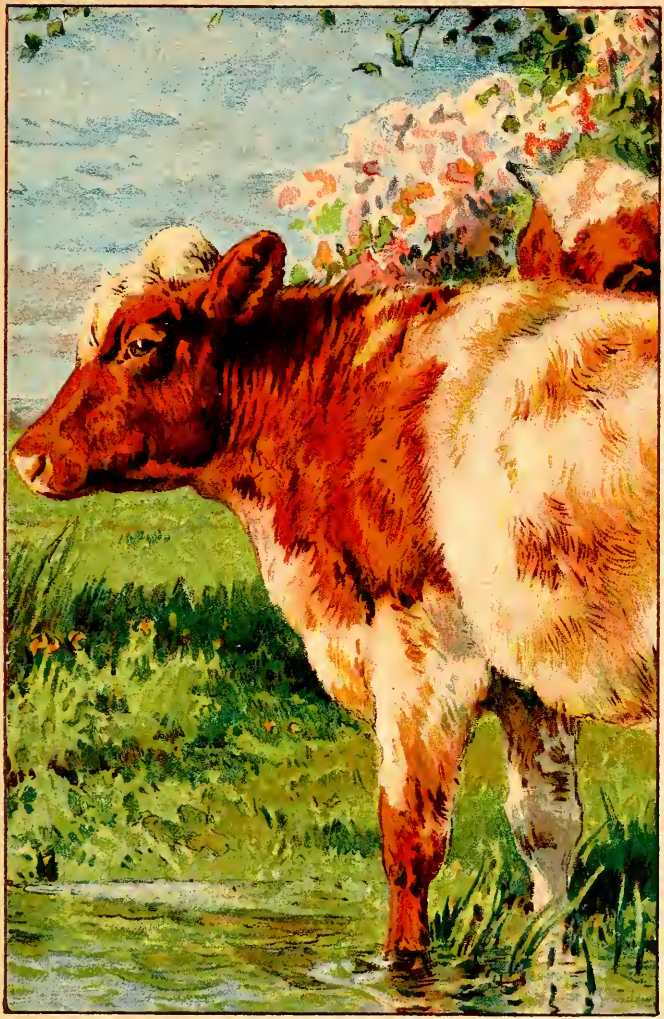
So now the bull had his poppy fairy always with him, and in the summer she rode upon his horns, and in the cold weather she sat inside his ear, just where the velvety soft hairs are. And in all the world there is not a more merry beautiful fairy than she, or a happier bull than he.

THE SACRED BULL.

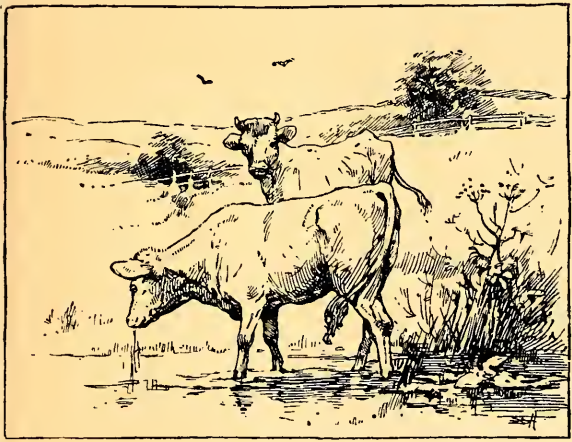
BUTTERCUP and Daisy stood at the edge of the pond in the cow-field. It was very hot and Daisy was cross—the flies worried her so. She stood with her two fore-feet in the water—her mother had told her not to—but as I said before, Daisy was cross, and when little calves are cross, and the weather is warm and the water is cold, they don't always do as they are told.

Buttercup didn't put her feet in the water. You see Buttercup was not cross.

"Oh, those flies!" said Daisy,



whisking her tail round and putting it into Buttercup's eye by mistake. Buttercup began to cry and gave her sister a little



shove with her new horns, which were just growing, and Daisy fell on her knees in the mud.

"You nasty little thing!"

she said, "I don't like you any more. Oh yes, you can tell Mother if you like, but I shan't get into trouble. I'm going away from this horrid old field."

Buttercup ran off to her Mother and Daisy got up and tried to wash her knees.

Presently she heard all the others calling her.

"I shan't go," she said to herself, but when she turned her head a tiny bit and looked out of the corner of her eye so that the others should not see that she was looking, she saw that they were all running as hard as they could towards the gate that led into the road.

"I'll just go and see what it is," she said, "and then I can run away afterwards, but I won't speak to any of them." She hurried across the field, and when she got to the gate some of the kind cows made room for her,

and she looked into the road. There she saw every sort and kind of animal! There was going to be a circus in the town, and all the animals were walking down the road in a procession.

First came the elephants, four of them—walking two and two—with their keepers beside them. Then came two camels, then a large cage of lions—drawn by horses—then another cage with tigers, and another with wolves in it. Oh, it was going to be a fine circus!

Then there were a great many horses ridden by people in beautiful dresses, and, last of all, came the most wonderful thing of all. It was a bull led by a man dressed like an Indian in gold-embroidered satin, who carried a trumpet in his hand, which he blew now and then after shouting, "Honour to my lord, the Sacred Bull of Burma!"

"Good gracious!" said Daisy's Mother, "is that a bull? Poor thing, he does look ill and worn-like; a run in our field for a month or two would set him up for ever."

Indeed the bull did look rather strange. All his hair had been carefully shaved, leaving him just in his pink skin, and then he had been tattooed, which means that he was covered with a pattern, drawn in blue. His horns had been gilded. He gave one look at the cows looking over the gate, as the procession turned the corner, and that was the last they saw of him. Daisy had quite forgotten her quarrel

with Buttercup, and they both walked away from the gate, talking of the wonderful things they had just seen, and especially of the bull.

"Don't you think, Butty," said Daisy, "that we could do something for the bull? He must be dreadfully cold without his proper coat. I feel so sorry for him."

"So do I," said Buttercup, "but I don't know what we could do."

"I shall try and find out where he lives," said Daisy, "and then perhaps we could get him away from those people and he could stop here and live

with us. I'm sure he could tell us lovely tales."

"Yes," said Buttercup, "but how will you do it?"

"I don't know," said Daisy, "I must think."

So all the afternoon Daisy thought, and thought, and when the sun sank down and twilight came she got through a hole in the hedge and went down the road, down which the procession had gone that morning. When she had turned the corner of the road she saw before her, in one of the fields, a great white tent, with a great many caravans round it. Daisy was a sensible little calf, and she

knew at once that this tent must have something to do with the Sacred Bull. So she walked up to it and looked through a small opening at the side. It was filled with people, and Daisy saw elephants doing tricks in the large ring, which was in the middle of the tent. She saw the cages of lions and tigers, but there was no Sacred Bull. Then Daisy said to herself:

"He must be outside—that is better, because no one will see me speak to him," and she walked away from the tent and sniffed all round the caravans, but she could not find the bull.

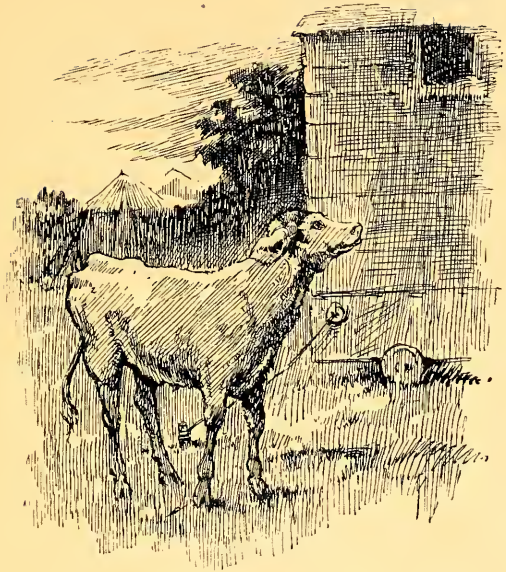
At last she saw a little wooden hut on wheels.

"That must be his house," she said, and hurried up to it. When she got near it she mooed gently, and the Sacred Bull put his head out of a hole at one side of his house and answered her.

Now although the Bull was a Burmese bull there is only one language for bulls and cows in all countries, and he understood at once what Daisy had said to him.

"What is this field you speak of?" he said.

"Why!" said Daisy, "it's just a field. Don't you know what a field is? This is a field



too, but it's not as nice as *our* field."

"Say 'my lord' when you speak to me," said the bull, "and bend your knees. All people bow down before me wherever I go."

"But I'm sure our cows won't be always bending their knees in the field," said Daisy, trying to bend hers as she spoke, and only hurting herself rather badly, besides looking silly.

"Then *I* certainly shan't come!" said the bull. "What do you have to eat there?"

"We eat the flowers and the sweet green grass—my lord," said Daisy.

"Common green grass!' shrieked the bull, "why, look here!" and he took hold of Daisy to make her look into his stall. It was painted in white and gold, and in one corner there was a large shining bowl of

polished wood, filled with beautiful fresh vegetables.

"What do you think of that?" said the bull. "Go home, little cowlet, to your old field. When *I* go out people bend their knees before me, and give me sweet things to eat, and make beautiful noises in my honour, while you are driven along by a boy with a stick—ah! it's something to be a Sacred Bull of Burma I can tell you!" and he put his head back into his stall and would not speak again.

Daisy turned away and walked sadly home. She felt very angry with the bull and very sorry that she had taken so much

trouble for him. When she got home she told her Mother all about it.

"Of course!" said her Mother, "never meddle with other people. And, my dear little calf, what *have* you done to your knees?" she cried, beginning to lick Daisy's knees, for they looked a little sore still.

"It was bending them before the Sacred Bull," said Daisy.

"Sacred Bull, indeed! sacred cabbage-stalks. Lie down and go to sleep, Daisy, and mind you don't fill your sister's head with any nonsense about Sacred Bulls!"

Daisy did as she was told,

but just as she was dropping off to sleep, she gave a little shake of joy. "Why," she said, "I don't mind! I don't believe any calf ever had such an adventure before."

And I am sure she was right.

OUR COW'S COW FIGHT.

IT was our Sussex brown cow who told me all this, so I am sure it is true. If you had ever seen our Sussex brown you would know how very truthful she is. I used sometimes to go to her house, and sit by the door in the evening, after milking-time, and listen to the stories she would tell me. She knew many very different stories but she was most fond of this one. I will tell it to you just as she used to tell it to me.

"You know, my dear," she would begin, "I did not always

live at this farm. I used to belong to a very rich farmer, who had a large farm in Sussex. I was born and bred in Sussex —the best place for a cow to be born in, I can tell you—and it was only three or four years ago that I came to live here. Well, we used to be driven into one field in the morning and taken back to our houses in the evening, and in that field there was an old black horse. I believe he stayed there night and day, for I never saw him taken into a stable. He was very black and had no doubt been handsome in his day, but he was getting very old, although he

always pretended to be as young and gay as ever. He would come up to us when we were grazing and start clearing his throat. Did I hear you laugh, my dear?" she said suddenly, looking at me rather sadly out of her velvety-brown eyes. "Horses, like men, clear their throats to draw attention when they are going to speak."

"What did the horse do when he had cleared his throat?" I asked.

"Oh," he said—'Excuse me, ladies, but did I ever tell you that I come of a very ancient Spanish stock?'

"Generally we just said 'Yes,

and went on eating, but it didn't stop his talk.

"'Oh, those were good old days!' he would say. 'I was ridden by a toreador in those days.' If there were a calf in the field the silly little thing would say 'What is a Toreador?' and that was just what the old horse wanted to be asked.

"'A toreador is a man who fights bulls,' he would say proudly. 'I and my companions used to be ridden by these toreadors into the arena, which is a large round place, like the thing that is called a circus ring I believe. We didn't wear harness as horses do here, but what our toreadors

called "trappings." And these trappings were made of bright red cloth. Our toreadors were dressed in scarlet, too, and carried little pieces of red silk in their hands. Then someone would open a door in the side of the arena and the bull would come in. He was always rather stupid at first and used to stare about him without seeing anything, until the toreadors galloped up with us and shouted and waved their red flags. Then the silly old thing would get angry, and try to run his horns into us, but we were always too quick for him. At least, of course, some of the horses used to get

hurt sometimes, but *I* never did. It only needed a little sense to keep out of the way of such a stupid old noodle as a bull. And he always got killed in the end by our brave toreadors.'

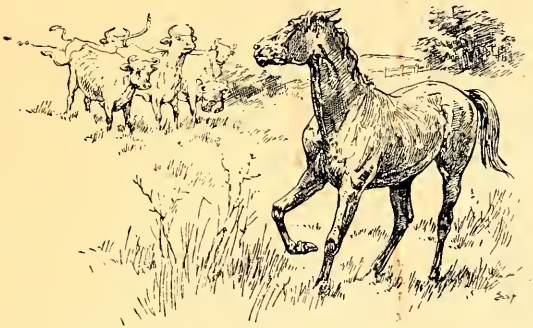
"'*Brave* toreaders, indeed!' we used to say very angrily, because of course it was very rude of him to come and talk of our relations the bulls like that. Besides, we never really believed him at all. He only made it up to annoy us."

"Oh, no, Brownie!" I said, "there really are bull-fights you know."

"Nonsense," said Brownie "don't try to teach *me!* I know

more of the world than you do, and I don't believe it."

"All right, Brownie dear," I said quickly, "you *do* know



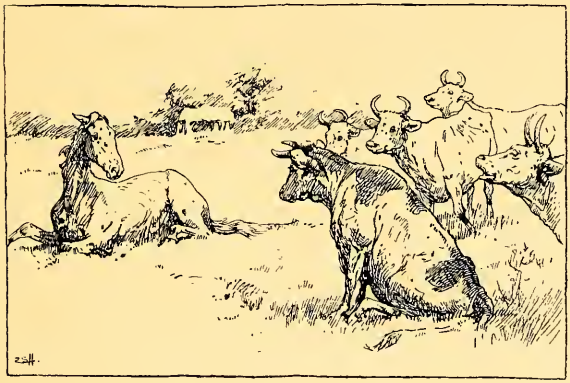
ever so many things. Please, go on with the story."

"Well, perhaps we shouldn't have minded so much if the old horse had only told us this once, but he did it every day and we got tired of him.

"So, one day, before he had come up to us, I said to the others, 'Look here! Let's see if he is as brave and as quick at bull-fights as he says. We can't give him a bull-fight but we can show him what cows can do. In his bull-fights there were always a lot of horses and only one bull. Well, in our cow fight there will be only one horse and a great many cows. Now, all of you, when he comes to speak to us this morning, put down your horns and run at him!'"

"Oh, Brownie, Brownie!" I said, "I thought you were always kind and gentle. Poor old horse!"

"No, my dear, *not* poor old horse! We had had quite enough of that tiresome old creature and it was time we

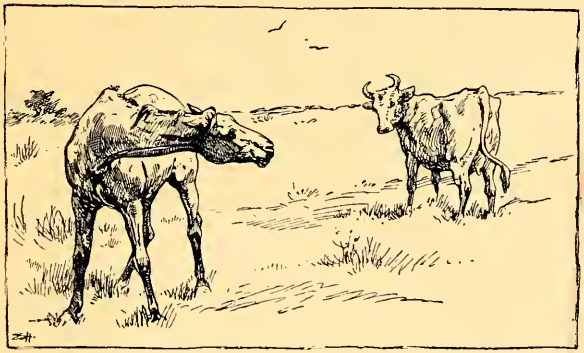


stopped his nonsense," said Brownie. "The others all agreed to do as I had told them, and when the old horse came up to us we made a dash at him.

He was dreadfully frightened and ran away, but we chased him and chased him, and wherever he turned he found a cow ready to try and toss him. Of course, we never really touched him, but he was just as frightened as if we had tossed him all to bits. At last, he began to beg us to stop, and I said, 'We will stop, if you will promise us something.'

"'Oh—*anything*,' he said, and sank down on the grass. We all lay down around him and laughed and laughed. 'Oh dear, oh dear!' said our Sussex Brown, beginning to laugh at the thought of it.

"Have you ever heard a cow laugh? If ever you do I am sure you will laugh too, because it is much funnier than most things.



"At last," Brownie went on, "when I had got my breath and was able to stop laughing, I said, 'You must promise never to talk of bull-fights again. We

are thoroughly tired of your boasting stories, and we know just how brave you are now. If you can't win a cow-fight I'm sure you could never get the better of a bull.'

"'I promise,' said the old horse, 'but you ought to have seen our toreador when the bull was dead and they—'

"'Get up!' I called to the others, 'he is ready for another cow-fight. Down with your horns, my friends!'

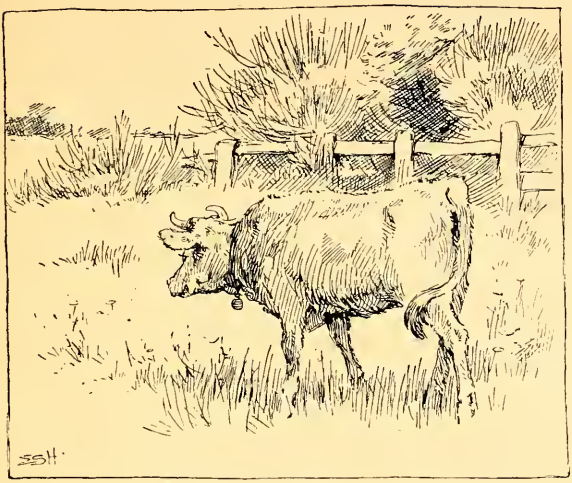
"'No, no!' said the old horse, 'I will never talk about it again,' and he never did. But oh dear, my dear, I wish you could have seen us chasing that horse all

round the field? It was *so* funny! And our Sussex Brown began to chuckle and laugh so loudly that she did not answer me when I said 'Good-night,' and went out of her house. I could hear her still laughing to herself as I went into the farm."

PANSY'S FORTUNE.

"I'M not going to stay in this field any longer," said Pansy the spotted cow to old Mrs. Spot, her aunt. "Nothing ever happens here—it's so dull. I shall go out into the world."

"Don't talk stuff and nonsense!" said Mrs. Spot. "Whoever heard of a cow being dull? It's not a cow's business to be anything else? Come now, you're behaving as if you were a young calf. There's a nice patch of buttercups over there. Go and eat them and you'll feel better. It's only the weather



that's making you feel like this."

Well, Pansy walked away and ate the buttercups but she didn't feel better. "I knew I shouldn't," she said to herself. "I shall go and seek my fortune."

Now it happened that Jim, the

stable boy, had left the gate of the field open, and Pansy slipped through without anyone seeing her.

"I can't go alone," she said; "I must find some other cow to go with me."

She walked down the lane, stopping every now and then to nibble a twig from the hedge.

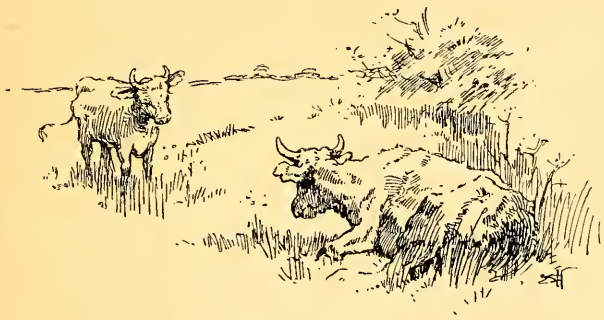
"Everything tastes much sweeter out here," she said. "I'm glad I came."

Presently she saw some more cows in a field, and she mooed to make them look at her.

"Will any of you come and seek your fortunes with me?" she called. None of them spoke, but a large old cow sitting

under the hedge said sharply: "Cows don't have fortunes, so it's no use seeking them."

Pansy was walking away when she heard a soft voice say:



"I will come with you," and, looking round, saw a brown cow, with short horns, following her. She was very glad to have someone to go with her; for to tell the truth she was feeling a little

frightened and had already begun to want to go back to her own field.

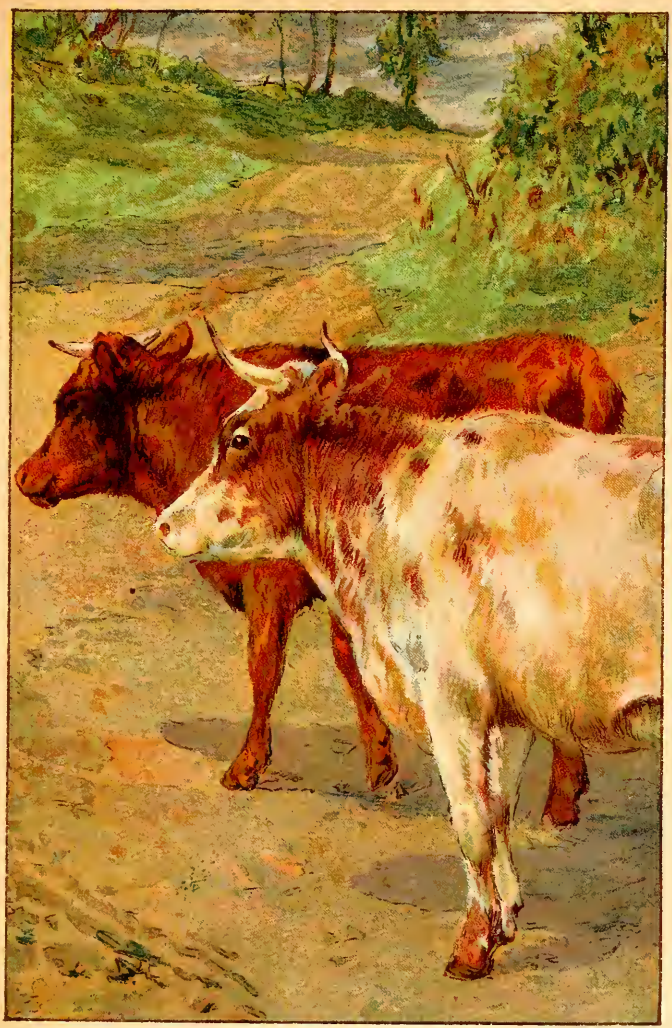
"What is your name?" she asked.

"Reddy," said the brown cow. "I have lived all my life in that field and I think I should like to see the world."

"Very well, then, follow me and I will show you many beautiful places," said Pansy, proudly.

Of course *we* know that Pansy had never been out of her field before, but Reddy thought she had travelled a great deal and followed her humbly.

They walked a long way



down the lane until they came to the crossroads.

"Which way shall we go?" said Pansy; "you may choose."

"Let's go different ways," said Reddy. "I don't expect we shall find two fortunes growing on one tree, so it will be better to go different ways."

You see, Reddy and Pansy did not know at all what fortunes were. They had heard of people seeking their fortunes so they thought they were some special kind of flower or leaf to eat. Pansy was not frightened now so they agreed to part and Pansy went down the road to the right.

We won't say any more about Reddy in this story, only I will tell you that she went a little way and then felt lonely so she turned back and got safely home.

But Pansy was braver and went on and on until she came to a wood.

"The very thing to find a fortune in," she cried in delight, and went in. Perhaps you think a cow would get scratched by the brambles in a wood, because of course you know how one has to push one's way through a wood sometimes, but the wood was not a very thick one and Pansy was able to walk through

without any trouble. Suddenly she heard a voice right at her feet say "Take care now, take care! Mind where you are put-

ting your great paws!" and looking down, saw a funny little brown person, with long ears, just beside her front hoofs.

"Who are you?" she asked rather timidly, because although this creature was so small it seemed very severe.

"Fancy having to ask who I am!" said the little creature, and sat up on its hind legs proudly. "Why, I and my relations own the whole wood, and could turn *you* out in the bobbing of a tail."

Of course, *we* should have said "in the twinkling of an eye," but rabbits (you must have guessed that this little person was a rabbit) don't know anything about twinkling eyes and so they don't talk about them.

"I won't do any harm to

your wood," said Pansy; "I have only come to look for my fortune. Can you tell me where I could find it?"

"Well, there now!" said the rabbit quite kindly, "I'm sure I don't know, but if you walk through the gate at the end of the wood you may find something nice; many of my relations have been in there and they say that the most wonderful things grow on the other side of the gate, but one has to take care not to get caught. Still, you are so much larger than we are that I don't think there is any danger for you. Come, I will show you the way. But be care-

ful not to step on me. You are a little clumsy about the paws, my dear, but I daresay it's not yout fault."

The rabbit ran on in front of Pansy until they came to a little wicket-gate.

"There!" said the rabbit, "I quite forgot that you were so big; you see, our folk run underneath the gate, but I'm afraid you can't possibly do that."

"Perhaps I can open it," said Pansy, and pushed against it with her shoulder. It opened with a sharp click, and startled little Mrs. Bunny so much that she scuttled back into the wood, without once turning round to wave to Pansy.

Sturt Hardy.

Now, although Pansy did not know it, she had got into a garden, and it happened that on that day—the weather being warm and sunny—the lady who lived in the house had told her two little girls that they might have their tea in the garden with their dollies. So when Pansy walked up the path and on to the lawn she came right into the middle of the doll's tea-party.

She mooed gently, but both little girls jumped up and ran away screaming, which was very silly of them, because, of course, Pansy did not mean to hurt them. Then Pansy sniffed all round the tea-table and ate up

the little cakes that were ready for the dolls' tea. She was just wondering whether those cakes were her fortune when she saw two red spiky things coming at her. They were really only two red sunshades, which the little girls were carrying in front of them, but Pansy had never seen anything so dreadful before and she ran down the path as hard as she could, through the gate into the wood, and through the wood into the lane, never looking back until she reached her own field. It was just milking time and Jim was driving the cows into the farmyard. She had not been missed. As she went past

the door of the farm house, the farmer's baby, who was sitting on the step, stretched out its arms to her and screamed "Wuffy-Duff!"

"Oh!" said Pansy, "after all it is nice to be called a Wuffy-Duff by that dear baby, and so I'm not sorry I came home again, even if I haven't got a fortune."

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